

Experts on the defensive: The *Tsiganologue* versus Romani activism (1959-1973)

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the figure of the *Tsiganologue*, the expert on the “Tsigane question,” in post-World War II France. Specifically, it analyses the role played by one of these experts in the police persecution of Roma ethnic activism during the 1960s and early 1970s. Drawing on this case study, its objective is two-fold: firstly, to show the central role that *Tsiganologues* played in the founding of the Romani movement; secondly, to explain how the self-perceptions of these experts (of their authority and role) were decisive factor in their interventions with the public authorities. The article draws on a wide range of sources from the French Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health and Population. It is structured in five parts: the first briefly defines and explains the concepts of expert, expert knowledge and ethnicity; the second describes the context and profile of the main agents studied (the *Tsiganologues*, Romani activists and the French police); the third and fourth parts examine in extenso the primary documentation; and finally, the fifth part offers a reflective summary of the profile of the *Tsiganologue*.

KEYWORDS: *Tsiganologie*; expert knowledge; police; Tsigane; Romani movement; Romani history.

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Título traducido: Expertos a la defensiva: el *tsiganologue* frente al activismo romaní (1959-1973).

RESUMEN: Este artículo aborda la figura del *tsiganologue*, el experto en la “cuestión Tsigane,” en la Francia posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En concreto, analiza el papel que uno de estos expertos desempeñó en la persecución policial del activismo étnico romaní durante los años sesenta y principios de los setenta. Partiendo de este caso de estudio, su propósito no es solo el de mostrar el papel esencial que los *tsiganologues* tuvieron en el hostigamiento al movimiento romaní, sino el de explicar de qué modo la percepción que estos expertos tenían de sí mismos (de su autoridad y función) resultó determinante para que intervinieran ante las autoridades públicas. El artículo emplea un amplio rango de fuentes procedentes del Ministerio del Interior y del Ministerio de Sanidad y de Población franceses. Su estructura consta de cinco partes: en la primera, se realizan unas breves precisiones conceptuales acerca de las nociones de experto, saber experto y etnicidad; en la segunda, se describe el contexto y el perfil de los principales agentes estudiados (los *tsiganologues*, el activismo romaní y la policía francesa); en la tercera y cuarta parte, se examina in extenso la documentación primaria; finalmente, en la quinta parte, se ofrece una síntesis reflexiva de acerca del perfil del *tsiganologue*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Tsiganologie*; saber experto; policía; Tsigane; movimiento Romani; historia Romani.

THE GUARDIANS OF A “CURIOUS DISCIPLINE”

Since their arrival in Europe in the Early Modern Age, Roma communities have endured continuous episodes of persecution and attempts of forced assimilation.¹ In France, these actions intensified at the beginning of the twentieth century after the law of July 16th, 1912 took effect. The law introduced a harsh administrative system that monitored, identified, and controlled these groups using instruments such as the anthropometric identity booklet, in which all those categorised as *Nomades* (Travellers)—a classification that included the Romani population but not only them—were required to carry.² This persecution reached its height during the Second World War, when the nomadic population was placed under surveillance by the French State and their freedom of movement was completely abolished (About, 2012, pp. 106-111).

After the end of the war, France undertook no legislative reform aimed at alleviating the legal discrimination faced by *Tsiganes*. The only initiative in this regard was the establishment, in 1948, of the Inter-ministerial Commission for the Study of Questions Concerning Populations of Nomad Origin, whose vague objective was to promote an “improvement in the living conditions of populations of nomadic origin (*Tziganes*, *Romaniches*, etc.).”³ Over the next two decades, this commission gave rise to new organisations. Some of these were scientific in nature, charged with providing the public authorities with accurate data on the history and “psychology” of the *Tsiganes*; others whose purpose was to provide social welfare, were responsible for determining the immediate needs of these “populations.” Their (mostly non-Romani) members called this *expert* knowledge *Tsiganologie*, defined themselves as *Tsiganologues*, and assumed responsibility for *civilising and integrating Tsiganes* and nomads into the national community. In the late 1950s, however, these *experts* witnessed the emergence of a new Roma associative network that spoke out against the paternalism of the *experts* and demanded their own voice and

agendas. From the outset, and despite a few attempts at rapprochement, the relationship between *Tsiganologues* and Romani activists was one of disagreement, if not outright confrontation; a confrontation, it should be stressed, between two very unequal forces in terms of power and resources.

This article explores the rivalry between these two agents (*experts* and activists), drawing on the specific case of one of these *Tsiganologues*, who played an important role, as informant and instigator, of the French police’s monitoring of the main leaders and organisations of the Romani movement on French soil between 1959 and 1973. This chronology, covering over two decades, has been examined using a wide range of sources from the French National Archives, in particular, reports from various departments of the French Ministry of the Interior and correspondence between its officials and the *Tsiganologues*, as well as internal documentation from associations of *experts* with links to the French Ministry of Health and Population. As studies such as the one by Sierra (2019a) on Romani activism, or the one by Blanchard (2011) on Algerian nationalism have demonstrated, the reports produced by the intelligence services are useful, not only to help fill the documentary gaps in the archives of semi-clandestine organisations but also to better understand the way the authorities used these reports to build up their knowledge and form perceptions.

Against this background, the purpose of this article is not to determine the specific effects that this persecution had on the development of the Romani movement on French soil, a question that would undoubtedly be important for the history of the latter but to analyse the arguments and claims made by the *Tsiganologues* against this movement to shed light on the *Tsiganologues’* perceptions of themselves as *experts* and of the *Tsiganes* as a population subject to their *scientific* observation and social protection. To this end, and as mentioned above, the article will contextualise the endeavours of Pierre Join-Lambert—one of the leading figures in *Tsiganologie*—to ensure that the French police monitored and silenced those Roma leaders who, by the nature of their demands, considered to be dangerous. While it cannot be denied that some heterogeneity existed amongst the *Tsiganologues* as regards the perception of the Romani movement, Join-Lambert’s undisputed leadership within the circle of experts, as well as the echo that his concerns had in those colleagues around him, are reason enough to consider that his position was, if not representative of the entire French *tsiganologie*, definitely illustrative of the perceptions harboured by an important portion of the individuals involved in the movement.

Tsiganologie, a “curious discipline,” as the Belgian anthropologist De Heusch (1965, p. 1093) described it during the years of its expansion, can be understood as a form of *territoire savant* [field of expert knowledge], similar to that of discipline but having more flexible boundaries, made up of *experts* from different backgrounds

1 Throughout the text, terms such as *Tsigane* (with this spelling or *Tzigané*), *Gitan*, *Nomad*, or *Gypsy* are used as exonyms historically imposed on the Roma (Roma is the self-designation agreed upon at the 1971 World Romani Congress). This article reproduces these terms as historical representations that appear in the sources. The term *Tsiganes* is also retained here since many French Roma identify with it. Although the terms *Tsiganologie* and *Tsiganologue* have been anglicised as “Tsiganology” and “Tsiganologist” by authors such as David Mayall, the original French terms will be retained in this text.

2 As Filhol and Hubert (2009, pp. 57-58) have explained, although the 1912 legislative text omitted any explicit reference to the *Tsiganes*, in 1926 a Ministry Instruction clarified that “nomads” often possessed physical and ethnic characteristics of the *Tsiganes*.

3 Order of 1 March 1949, of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health and Population, Archives Nationales de France, Santé; Direction population, migrations (hereafter ANF-S), 19870256-1. This commission set a standard that would soon be followed by other European countries, such as Italy (Klímová-Alexander, 2010, p. 111).

(both academic and amateur) (Popa *et al.*, 2018).⁴ These circles of academic and amateur *experts* take the form of an *epistemic community*, in the sense suggested by Haas (1992), a group whose authority translates into the almost automatic legitimization of their postulates, rigid control of the circulation of the knowledge that they themselves or others produce, and the direct influence of their work as experts on the implementation of national or international policy.⁵ Complementing this, the figure of the *Tsiganologue* can be likened to that of the *expert* proposed by Latour (2011), who emphasises their mediating role between different domains, such as academia, politics, administration or activism. The *expert*, however, does more than display their *savoir-faire* within these domains. As agents of specialised knowledge, they present their scientific ideas as politically or morally neutral, while at the same time invalidating (explicitly or subtly) those subaltern forms of knowledge that they consider to be lacking in scientific veracity (Foucault, 1997, pp. 16-17). Likewise, as an authority figure, the *expert* is in a position to make judgements and influence decision-making without being ultimately responsible for the consequences. Finally, the *expert* also *creates* an audience, with different profiles, that trusts in the validity of their postulates. This audience is not only society in general but also, in the context of modern states, the public administration, to whose way of thinking the *expert* contributes without, as Turner (2001, p. 136) points out, public opinion always being aware of this mediation.

Both the *expert* knowledge of *Tsiganologie* and post-World War II Romani activism took their first steps in the context of the debate over the validity of the concept of *race*, which had been contested by UNESCO as a “social myth” since the 1950s and was progressively replaced by that of *ethnicity*, which explained the difference between human groups by giving primacy to social and cultural factors (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996). Within the scientific community, this new explanatory model received different degrees of acceptance. It took several decades for *Tsiganologie* to completely abandon the racist paradigm, although attention to cultural aspects in its characterisation of *Tsiganes* difference was an essential component of its theories (Biaudet, 2009).⁶ At the same time, the conceptual structure of ethnicity as a set of cultural traits and a shared historical experience provided the post-war Romani movement with a useful framework within which to construct its discourse. Indeed, its activism would be an essential factor in constructing ethnicity itself since it helped other *Tsiganes* become aware that they belonged to the same identity community (Mayall, 2004, p. 219-228).

TSIGANOLOGUES AND TSIGANES

Although scholarly works on the *Tsiganes* were published as early as the 18th century, such as the widely praised *Die Zigeuner: Ein historischer Versuch über die Lebensart und Verfassung* (*The Gypsies: A historical essay on their way of life and constitution*) by Heinrich M. G. Grellmann, it was in 1888, with the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society, in Liverpool, that *expert* knowledge on the *Tsiganes* became institutionalized. For more than half a century, this scholarly circle held sway as the undisputed authority, and virtually the only *société savante* (learned society) dedicated to the subject (Mayall, 2004, pp. 180-186). However, in 1949, its French counterpart, the Association des Études Tsiganes (Association of *Tsiganes* Studies) was created in Paris, expressing its debt to and admiration for the Gypsy Lore Society, and devoting itself to the furtherance of the French version of *Gypsism*: *Tsiganologie* (Barrera, 2022a). This Association des Études Tsiganes was set up under the auspices of the aforementioned inter-ministerial commission, which, at its first working sessions in 1948, had identified the need for in-depth knowledge of the people it sought to help. The president of the commission, the Councillor of State, Pierre Join-Lambert (1906-1983), became vice-president of Études Tsiganes, thus demonstrating the close relationship between the circle of *savants* and State policy. Join-Lambert was joined by other figures whose careers in different disciplines and occupations provided them with knowledge that could contribute to the construction of *Tsiganologie*. They ranged from Oriental languages specialists, such as Pierre Meile, to clerics such as Jean Fleury, whose credentials as an *expert* were based on his involvement in social assistance for *Tsiganes* and nomads during the war (Filhol, 2007, pp. 69-82). The story of Jean Fleury also illustrates the relationship that Études Tsiganes established with French Catholic associations committed to the social and “spiritual” welfare of *Tsiganes*. Fleury, known for the assistance he had provided to Jews and nomads detained in concentration camps during the war, had been appointed Chaplain-General of Gitans and Tziganes in France back in 1948. In 1966, he would set up the Catholic Association Notre-Dame-des-Gitans (ANDG), which, despite some initial reservations, the *Tsiganologues* ended up collaborating with (Barrera, 2022b).

The work of this first post-war generation of *Tsiganologues* – a term that was adopted by the members of Études Tsiganes to refer to themselves, and as a translation of similar concepts such as *gypsilrist* – was divided between the intellectual task of researching the past and present of *Tsiganes* communities, and the more practical one of collaborating with the social services to eradicate the poverty and marginalisation that they had suffered.⁷

4 Further development of this reading of *Tsiganologie* as *territoire savant* can be found in Barrera, 2022a.

5 On the pioneering application of the notion of *epistemic community* to Romani Studies, see Surdu, 2016, pp. 13-22.

6 For a similar case of the British Gypsy Lore Society, see Acton, 2016.

7 The use of the name *Tsiganologue* as a synonym for *Tsiganes expert* was constant since the beginning of Études Tsiganes, as can be observed in its homonymous bulletin, *Études Tsiganes*. See, for example, references such as “The presence of for-

At least through the fifties and sixties, both tasks were strongly influenced by the fact that the majority of *Tsiganologues* subscribed to the exoticizing, orientalist trend popularised by the Gypsy Lore Society since the late nineteenth century, which stressed the Indian origin of the *Tsiganes* based on ethnic characteristics such as language. While the Asian origin was acknowledged to be remote, it served nevertheless to underpin their foreignness (Selling, 2018; Lee, 2000).

To complement this process of exoticisation, the question of the situation of the *Tsiganes* living in France was also read through the colonialist lens of social hierarchy. Supported by sociological studies carried out by both academics and social workers, members of the association argued that certain aspects of the *Tsiganes* indicative of their civilisational *backwardness*, could and should be modified, particularly their nomadism. These proposals would soon be joined by others of a more legal kind, such as the elimination of the 1912 anthropometrical identity booklet, which had contributed—as the *tsiganologues* noted and decried—to their being associated with criminal activities and vandalism (About, 2012; Filhol, 2013, pp. 59-73).⁸

To undertake these specific reforms, Études Tsiganes, and in particular its vice-president, Join-Lambert, promoted the creation, in 1960, of the Comité National d'Information et d'Action Sociales pour les Gens du Voyage et les Populations d'Origines Nomade (CNIN) (National Committee for Information and Social Action for Travellers and Populations of Nomadic Origin). This new body, whose board of directors also included Join-Lambert, was tasked with encouraging the formation in France of private associations for the social assistance of *Tsiganes*

and Travellers, and to serve as a liaison between them and the State. In the following decades, the CNIN, with the support of Études Tsiganes, maintained a determined effort to improve the material conditions of *Tsiganes* and Travellers in areas such as schooling or housing, with special attention to the regulation of parking areas.⁹

The creation of the CNIN coincided with the emergence, from 1959 onwards, of the first *Tsigane* associations in France. Romani activism had already taken its first tentative steps in Eastern Europe during the inter-war period but the conflict had prevented it from making further progress (Klímová-Alexander, 2007).¹⁰ At the end of the 1950s, there was a resurgence of momentum under new leaders, such as Ionel Rotaru, who would be declared “supreme leader of the *Tsiganes*” in Paris in 1959. After that, Rotaru promoted the creation of several associations, such as Les Amis du Peuple Tzigane (Friends of the Gypsy People) or the Communauté Mondiale Gitane (CMG) (World Gypsy Community), whose modest infrastructure (his flat in the Parisian *banlieue* was the centre of operations) did not prevent them from envisioning a wide-ranging set of claims and demands. Among them, the most controversial and, consequently, the ones that attracted most public attention as far as the CMG was concerned were the demands for compensation to be made to the *Tsiganes* for their persecution and genocide under Nazism and the creation of a *Tsigane* state: Romanestan (Sierra, 2019).

Rotaru was joined early on by other *Tsiganes*, such as the jurist Vanko Rouda (a name he adopted instead of his French one, Jacques Dauvergne), who worked as secretary of the CMG, and his brother Leuléa Rouda (formerly Jean Dauvergne). Leuléa Rouda was the representative in Frankfurt of the diplomatic network that the CMG had started to build from its very foundation, and which allowed the organisation to have representatives in other European countries and Canada. In addition to this, in 1961, Vanko Rouda, became the editor of the journal, *La Voix Mondiale Tsigane* (*World Gypsy Voice*), which served as the mouthpiece for the CMG's views in its early years (1961 to 1963, approximately). The banning of the CMG in 1965, as well as its internal divisions, led to the emergence, in the mid-1960s, of a new entity, the Comité International Tzigane (CIT) (International Gypsy Committee), led by Vanko Rouda, in which Rotaru had no involvement. The CIT established closer contact with Romani activism in the United Kingdom, which recognised the CIT as a reference for the Gypsy Council, founded in 1966 (Acton, 1974; Puxon, 2000). Vanko Rouda's CIT abandoned some of the aims of the former CMG, such as Romanestan, and focused on forming a common ethnic self-awareness among transnational “*Tsigane* peoples,” as well as appealing to the public authorities to

eigners and the interest they took in our discussions show the advantage of organising contacts between *Tsiganologues* from different countries,” in *Études Tsiganes* (ÉT), “Congrès des Études Tsiganes sur les Questions Sociales. 5 et 6 mai 1960,” 2 (1960) pp. 1-13. Likewise, “The President and Mr Join-Lambert expressed their interest in a close liaison between Belgian and French *Tsiganologues*,” in ÉT “Vie de l'Association” 3 (1966), p. 37. Also, alluding to one of the most prominent members of the circle, François de Vaux de Foletier: “Mr François de Vaux de Foletier, former director of the Archives of the Seine and the City of Paris, *Tsiganologue* and *Tsiganophile*, lecturer, known for his innumerable scholarly articles on *Tsiganes*, which have appeared in the *Bulletin des Études Tsiganes* and numerous periodical publications...,” in ÉT, “Un livre sur les *Tsiganes* dans l'Ancienne France,” 1-2 (1962), p. 35. Similarly, the consideration of their association as an international reference institution for *expert* knowledge can be illustrated by claims such as “Relations with organisations and individuals outside the Association with an interest in *Tsiganes* have developed. The correspondents of Études Tsiganes consider the Association to be a consultancy body on *Tsiganologie*,” in ÉT, “Vie de l'Association,” 4 (1967), p. 49.

8 For the position of Études Tsiganes on the sedentarisation of the *Tsiganes* and the use of the anthropometrical identity booklet, see, respectively, ÉT, “Le rôle de la sédentarisation dans l'adaptation des *Tsiganes*,” 1 (1961), pp. 1-30, and ÉT, “Congrès des Études Tsiganes sur les Questions Sociales. 5 et 6 mai 1960,” 2 (1960), p. 8. For a comparison with the Gypsy Lore Society and its view of Travellers as an exotic and backward community, see hAodha, 2011.

9 Constituent meeting and statutes of the CNIN, September 1960, ANF-S, 19870256-3.

10 The essential classic studies, even today, for any research associated with Romani activism, including the present one, are Acton (1974) and Liégeois (1976).

recognise their leaders as the legitimate representatives of and advocates for the *Tsiganes*.

None of this proved easy. On the one hand, any aspiration to official recognition of the *Tsigane* minority ran up against the ethnicity blindness that characterized the French tradition of republican universalism. While this stance was presented as race-neutral and had the virtue of preventing legal discrimination on racial grounds, it was, at the same time, an impediment to the development of policies that would protect communities affected by specific racism (Bleich, 2000; Simon, 2015).¹¹ At the same time, ethnicity blindness was a socio-cultural phenomenon, insofar as it contributed—in the French case, and during the 1950s and 1960s—to majority society rejecting or being negatively predisposed towards the ethnic claims of specific groups, particularly the Algerians and *Tsiganes*.

The efforts of the *Tsigane* associations were also hampered by the fact that the police services were monitoring their every movement. As Sierra (2019a) showed, in his work on Ionel Rotaru, *Tsigane* leaders became the target of several investigations that sought to neutralize their activities. The officials in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, particularly, the Ministry of the Interior, put their police and intelligence services (reporting to the Direction de la Réglementation [Directorate of Regulations], which was itself under the authority of the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Nationale (DGSN) [Directorate-General of National Security]), to work on surveillance of the Romani associative network.¹²

The police culture shared by the individuals of different ranks who occupied these positions of power in the 1960s was strongly anti-communist and was noted particularly for the xenophobic violence with which questions relating to the immigration and progressive politicisation of Algerian French nationals were tackled. As Blanchard (2011, p. 362) shows, the French intelligence services drew on the experience of associations such as *Études sociales nord-africaines*, whose journal, *Cahiers nord-africains*, was essential for them to gain a better understanding of the organisations they were persecuting. The circulation of knowledge between *expert* circles and the intelligence services in charge of monitoring Algerian nationalism set a direct precedent for the case study analysed here. Apart from that, and more generally,

while the assumption of criminality and the persecutory methods used against the Algerian population were not transferred automatically or in exactly the same way to Romani activism, the culture of criminalisation of a racial Other made the police and intelligence services particularly receptive to the reports and accusations of the *Tsiganologues*.

THE EXPERT WARNS: “IT’S ALL A CON” (1959-1965)

In the spring of 1959, several media published the news that a writer of Romanian origin, Ionel Rotaru, had been enthroned as “supreme leader” of the *Tsiganes* under the name of Vaida Voevod III, in Enghien-les-Bains, a small town north of Paris.¹³ The event did not go unnoticed by the DGSN. In the same year, it produced a report revealing concerns that Rotaru, who appeared to have contacts with other Romanians of “different political tendencies,” might be a spy, although he could not be accused of anything because “no specific charges could be brought against him.” He had, on the other hand, been fined for not complying with the legal obligations associated with his status as a foreign worker. This, together with other work-related incidents, led the informants to conclude that Rotaru found it “very difficult to adapt to manual labour,” although he was acknowledged to have “a certain talent as a writer and artistic tastes.” Finally, the report attached little importance (barely two paragraphs in a five-page text) either to his coronation as the king of the *Tsiganes* or to his “mission,” which it categorized as “apolitical” (“to arbitrate conflicts, to perform marriages”).¹⁴

The coronation triggered stronger reactions from the *Études Tsiganes* association, whose journal, *Études Tsiganes*, was quick to disparage Rotaru, calling him “one of the many *Tsigane* sovereigns with whom the French Republican press often entertains its readers,” even going so far as to suggest that his popularity would be “ephemeral.”¹⁵ But not everyone in *Études Tsiganes* shared this confidence that Vaida Voevod III’s reign would be short-lived. From 1959, Join-Lambert, who had been and continued to be the driving force behind the *Tsiganologue* circle, was highly suspicious of Rotaru’s intentions and did not dismiss the extent of his plans as *Tsigane* leader. On October 23rd, 1961, he sent a letter to the Directeur Général de la Population (Director-General of the Population), attaching “one of the countless articles celebrating the glory of Ionel Rotaru,”

11 As Möschel (2017) explains, two exceptions to this “ethnicity blindness” have been recognized historically: those made for “indigenous people” in the colonial context, and for Jews during the Vichy regime. According to Möschel, another exception should be added to these: the 1912 law, whose category of “nomad” implicitly contained an anti-Roma racist bias. By virtue of this rule, the Roma, who did not enjoy legal recognition as a minority, faced implicit legal discrimination because of the racial component in the 1912 law.

12 The development of these services during the Fifth Republic, from the DGSN, which comprised the abovementioned police and intelligence bodies, until its transformation into the Direction Générale de la Police Nationale [Directorate-General of the National Police] from 1966 onwards, is described in: Douglas, 1996, pp. 265-292 and 404-421; Anderson, 2011, pp. 117-144.

13 *ÉT*, 23 (1959), p. 12. Rotaru’s first name, as recorded in the reports, varied a good deal during these years (Ionel, Yonel, and so on).

14 Report by Renseignements Généraux (hereafter RG) [Intelligence Services], DGSN, 21 July 1959. Archives Nationales de France, Intérieur, Direction des libertés publiques et des affaires juridiques, Nomades-Gens de Voyages (hereafter ANF-I), 19970156-3.

15 *ÉT*, 2 (1960), p. 18.

a celebration, Join-Lambert noted, which “I believe is serious and seems to me to require a reaction from the public authorities.” Join-Lambert was concerned that this Rotaru, “a foreigner, a Romanian, who does not seem to have anything *Tsigane* about him,” was attracting public attention with his “con trick.” That was why he himself [Join-Lambert] was pushing for “police investigations” and would soon be meeting with a representative of the Interior Ministry, whom he subtly criticised for neglecting the issue. “Of course, this Ministry currently has many more serious troubles” (a few days earlier, the Paris massacre, on October 17th, had put the Paris police and its use of violent, repressive practices against the Algerian population in the spotlight); “Nevertheless,” he continued, “it cannot do any harm to put an end to what looks like a confidence trick.”¹⁶

Indeed, in the weeks that followed, Join-Lambert corresponded frequently with several high-ranking officials in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health and Population. The State Councillor informed them that Rotaru had founded an association called Les Amis du Peuple Tzigane (Friends of the Tzigane People) and suggested that they should make “a call to the Prefecture of Police” for more information.¹⁷ He also stated that “Yonel’s actions run directly counter to the efforts of the French public authorities,” who were working to “progressively assimilate the *Tsigane* and *Gitanes* populations with everyone else living on French territory. [...] A political necessity.” Confident of his authority, Join-Lambert placed himself at the disposal of the police services to “discuss the subject” and to review with DGSN officials “the problems relating to the *Tsiganes* and *Gitanes*.”¹⁸ Join-Lambert’s many contacts in the government in his capacity as State Councillor, together with his position as chairman of the inter-ministerial commission, his status as an *expert* and his dogged persistence, produced the result the *Tsiganologue* had hoped for. In November 1961, the Bureau de la Police Générale (General Police Bureau) set about gathering all available information in the Ministry of the Interior concerning the association and its founder. This marked the beginning of a close collaboration between representatives of *Tsiganologie* and the police forces to control and deactivate the Romani movement.

However, the two reports that the intelligence services produced in those months “at the request of M. Join-Lambert,” which were duly forwarded to him with the warning that they were “strictly confidential,” showed that police fears concerning Rotaru did not necessarily

coincide with those of the *Tsiganologue*.¹⁹ Despite having been briefed that Rotaru, whose *Tsigane* origins he considered to be “unlikely,” was intending to “create a *Gitan* State,” the Interior Ministry officials seemed more concerned about Rotaru’s communist companions: behind the first association, Les Amis du Peuple Tzigane, there were names of “activists” whom the police had been tracking for some time, so they insisted that these profiles should be investigated further.²⁰ The second of these reports even contained statements, allegedly made by Rotaru himself, in which he said that he conceived of his movement as “absolutely apolitical” but later stated specifically that “Romanestan is a project. Nothing concrete has been done yet but we hope to do something.” None of this seemed to worry the informant who concluded as previously in 1959, that “at present, there are no unfavourable notes on conduct and morality, and he is not attracting political attention.”²¹

Études Tsiganes did not take the question of Romanestan so lightly. They used the project, which they supposed to be fanciful and unrealistic, to discredit and ridicule Rotaru, claiming that the creation of a *Tsigane* State had provoked “considerable disquiet among many Tsiganes: [those who are] French want to remain French; [those who are] foreigners or stateless want to become French; they fear they will be forced to leave our country.”²² The latter was by no means the only protest against Rotaru’s project on the part of Études Tsiganes, which repeatedly warned of the potential damage that the Romanestan utopia could do to the Tsiganes: “The activity of the ‘king’ continues to give cause for concern. It is particularly so [concerning], if we consider that there is, in fact, no Tsigane king with true authority and that the African kingdom is a mirage...”²³ As Sierra (2019a) has pointed out, the aspiration to the creation of a Romanestan was, nevertheless, a powerful instrument of identitarian mobilisation and a potent symbol of the resurgence

16 Letter from Pierre Join-Lambert to M. Lory, Directeur Général de la Population, Ministry of Health and Population, 23 October 1961, ANF-I, 19970156-3. Reactions to the policing of the massacre of October 17 in House and MacMaster, 2006.

17 Letter from Pierre Join-Lambert to F. Piazza, Direction de la Réglementation [Directorate of Regulations], 2 November 1961, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

18 Letter from Pierre Join-Lambert to Jean Gouaze, Directeur de la Réglementation, 2 November 1961, passing on the information that he had sent to M. Lory, Directeur Général de la Population, on 23 October 1961.

19 Report from the Sous-Direction des Affaires Techniques [Sub-Directorate for Technical Affairs], 28 October 1961 (first report); Report on Les amis du peuple tzigane, RG, 5 January 1962 (second report, preceded by a note by F. Piazza indicating that it was written “at the request of Join-Lambert”); Letter from F. Piazza, Direction de la Réglementation to Join-Lambert (passing on confidential information), 12 January 1962. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

20 The warning about Rotaru’s intentions concerning Romanestan in Letter from Pierre Join-Lambert to M. Lory, cit. The rest in Letter from Jean Gouaze, Directeur de la Réglementation, to the Directeur des RG, 24 November 1961. Gouaze demanded that, in addition to Rotaru himself, the other members of the association’s board of directors, including names such as Guy Vinatrel, an alias of the communist activist, Gilbert Pradet, be investigated for their links to the association, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

21 Report on Les amis du peuple tzigane, RG, 5 January 1962. This report was accompanied by profiles of each of the members of the association, as Gouaze had insisted. Also enclosed was a transcript of an article that the journalist Kosta Christitch had published in *Le Monde*, entitled “L’imposture de Vaida Voievod III,” on 29 December 1961, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

22 *ÉT*, “Nouvelles diverses,” 3-4 (1961), p. 32.

23 *ÉT*, “Informations diverses,” 1-2 (1967), p. 62.

of the Romani movement. Under the auspices of Rotaru, this associative network did not stop growing or raising expectations about its possible achievements. In 1960, Rotaru founded a second association, the Communauté Mondiale Gitane (CMG) (World Gypsy Community), which the brothers Vanko and Leuléa Rouda joined, and which gained visibility from the attention given to it by the journal edited by Vanko, *La Voix Mondiale Tsigane*.

Neither the maturing of the movement's aims nor the growing media attention that Rotaru and the CMG were receiving—thanks largely to the support of the French anti-racist movement—went unnoticed by Join-Lambert, who continued to put pressure on his ministerial contacts. In June 1962, the chief of staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Ministry of the Interior explaining that Join-Lambert has “drawn my attention to the harmful activity of a certain Rotaru, who introduces himself as President of the World Gypsy Community.”²⁴ Join-Lambert knocked on several doors that summer, seeking help to reduce the public visibility of the CMG and undermine Rotaru's promises. At the end of June, tireless as ever, he sent another letter to the Directorate of Regulations (reporting to the Ministry of the Interior), reminding them of the existence of the CNIN, which had taken on “a certain number of tasks that are actually public service tasks” (and gave examples of some of the tasks carried out by the *Tsiganologues* and social workers in the CNIN) and insisted once again that the right thing to do was to support this body in its attempt to quash projects such as the CMG, which seeks only “to lead a *Tzigane* nationalist movement.” It was obvious that, for Join-Lambert, the CMG and its leaders were far from being “apolitical.” Faced with the possibility that Rotaru would continue to receive media attention, Join-Lambert repeatedly pressed for ministerial intervention to prevent the CMG leader from being interviewed, with only partial success.²⁵

While trying to keep Rotaru out of the media spotlight, Join-Lambert went a step further and began to provide the Ministry of the Interior services with intelligence. In July, he sent the Directorate of Regulations two documents: a CMG “memorandum”—apparently an internal document, although its origin is not specified — and a report of his own, in which Join-Lambert stated that he was aware of the CMG's “cultural and social concerns” and expressed the wish that the public authorities would support Études Tsiganes and the CNIN so that it would be they (and not the CMG) who would fulfil this role.

24 Letter from Robert Guillet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 23 June 1962. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

25 Letter from Join-Lambert to M. Gouazé, Direction de la Réglementation, 29 June 1962. Having received the request from Join-Lambert (who insisted several times on question of media attention), the Direction de la Réglementation was informed that the Minister of Culture, André Malraux, would ignore any request from Rotaru, although the question of preventing Rotaru from appearing on the radio seemed more difficult to resolve. Handwritten note by M. Piazza, Direction de la Réglementation, 19 July 1962, ANF-I, 19970156-3. For Malraux's relationship with *Études Tsiganes*, see Barrera, 2022c.

In Join-Lambert's view, the expectations of the CNIN at the end of the day were good: the *Tsiganes* were starting to express their interest in joining the CNIN and “acting within a French framework”; “with these [Tsiganes], it seem[ed] that fears about the formation of a national *Tzigane* minority could be dismissed.”²⁶ These and other statements in Join-Lambert's extensive correspondence with the administration in those months showed that his opposition to Rotaru was closely tied to his eagerness to protect the interests and future of the organisations he led since their success depended on the support of both the public authorities and the *Tsiganes*. It was therefore crucial for the *Tsiganologue* to prove how well he knew the *Tsigane* communities, to display an honest concern for their welfare and, at the same time, suppress any projects (such as Roma activism) that might rival his own.

In the event, it was neither Join-Lambert's insistence nor Rotaru's constant press appearances about the *Gitan* State that aroused real concern on the part of the police but the audacity with which Rotaru addressed French political representatives directly.²⁷ In the spring of 1964, the CMG sent a letter to the deputies of the National Assembly in which, in addition to criticising the work of the 1948 inter-ministerial commission, he called for several reforms, such as the improvement of parking spaces, repeal of the 1912 law and abolition of the anthropometrical identity booklet. It concluded damningly by saying that: “if the subsidies granted for quite some time by the French government to solve the gitan problem had been used for these purposes, there would no longer be a gitan problem in France.”²⁸

Rotaru's boldness before the Assembly set the police machinery in motion once again, and its activity intensified a few months later when, on behalf of the CMG, Rotaru himself approached the Director-General of UNESCO to explain the “problems involved in educating the *Gitan* people and the preservation of their culture.” The Director of UNESCO then requested information about Rotaru and the CMG from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn urgently demanded that the Directorate of Regulations clarify the matter.²⁹ The

26 Letter from Join-Lambert to M. Piazza, Direction de la Réglementation, 19 July 1962, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

27 In November 1962, a newspaper reported Rotaru's intention to make Lyon the world capital of the *Tsiganes* and welcome the “French *Gitans*” there. According to Liégeois, the news was published in *Le Figaro* on 21 November 1962, Liégeois, 1976, p. 137. Nevertheless, the news did not appear to arouse any suspicions among the authorities since no note mentions it.

28 The letter was reproduced in the journal of the Ligue internationale contre l'antisémitisme [International League Against Antisemitism], *Le Droit de Vivre* [The Right to Live] [LDV], “Avec le soutien des parlementaires, les justes revendications de la Communauté Mondiale Gitane doivent être retenues par les pouvoirs publics” [With the support of parliamentarians, the just claims of the World Gypsy Community must be taken up by the public authorities], 317 (1964), p. 5.

29 Note from Adrien Wiart, superintendent of the Bureau de la Police Générale, 3 April 1964. File 2754 was opened on the 11th of the same month, Letter from Pierre Bardin, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Direction de la Réglementation, 23 No-

flurry of bureaucratic activity of those months culminated in new reports, in which, accepting the *expert* judgement on Rotaru's illegality, it was stated that, despite his having been crowned king, "it appear[ed] that this title [was] contested by several Tzigane communities."³⁰ Furthermore, another report, quoting the unimpeachable authority of one of the leading members of Études Tsiganes and the CNIN, added that "Father Fleury, Chaplain-General of Gitans and Tziganes in France [has] the most serious reservations about the authenticity of his Tzigane origin."³¹ In short, the police had accepted the contestation of Rotaru's identity that the *Tsiganologues* had been making since 1959 (and would continue to do with his successors). Apart from the charge of fraudulent misrepresentation, Rotaru's association was not properly registered, so that, the report concluded:

the leaders of the World Community can be prosecuted for abuse of title since their association is not recognised as being of public utility, and for violation of the provisions of the decree of April 12, 1939, demonstrating that Mr. Rotaru is in fact the leader of the movement.³²

For their part, the *Tsiganologues*, who had been directing the attention of UNESCO to their own activities for years, were also puzzled by the CMG's manoeuvres.³³ As anticipated in the introduction, the reaction of other experts from the same circle clearly shows that other *Tsiganologues* (in fact, the most relevant among them), and not only Join Lambert, perceived the Romani movement as a threat. Thus, for example, Louis Peyssard, president of the CNIN, shared the sentiments of his colleague, Join-Lambert, concerning Rotaru: "The way he manages to work his way into the most diverse circles, parliamentary and administrative in particular, is obviously embarrassing."³⁴ And in addition to Rotaru, the pervasive activity of all the organisation's leaders was causing growing unease among the *Tsiganologues*: "far from reducing their activity, they are intensifying it. They are lobbying members of parliament, they are holding press conferences. A reaction is, under such circumstances, essential," they declared at their meetings. To this

end, they proposed a series of measures, some aimed at boosting the CNIN's popularity, such as the creation of a "public relations service" that would enable the committee to have more direct contact with the Tsiganes, and others aimed at putting an end to Rotaru's project, such as banning his residency or abolishing the CMG.³⁵ A few months after that meeting, on February 26th, 1965, the CMG was effectively dissolved by order of the Ministry of the Interior.³⁶ Rotaru publicly protested against this from the platform of the anti-racist movement ("we would have expected anything but this") but could do nothing about it.³⁷ He then moved to Switzerland, where he reactivated the association away from the radar of the French police (Sierra, 2019: 283).

The demise of the CMG did not mean the decline of Romani activism. By the mid-1960s, a new entity had already been formed within the CMG, although it was not made official until 1967, under the name of the Comité International Tzigane (International Tzigane Committee) (CIT). The head of this new organisation, which was never legally registered in France to escape the control of the authorities, was Vanko Rouda. Despite having supported Rotaru's project, Rouda never gave up his own position within it. His impassioned writings and media speeches referred, not so much to plans for a Romanestan as to the fact, incontrovertible to him, that the *Tsiganes* "People" were "a nation, in other words, a distinct human community that [had] the right as such to administer itself."³⁸ Or, as he would later reflect, "while forming a nationality, the Gitan People are not yet a nation."³⁹

Furthermore, unlike Rotaru who was eccentric and idealistic in nature, Rouda was always more pragmatic. Admittedly, between 1963 and 1964, he called for a rapprochement between the *Tsiganologues* and the Romani associations through his journal, *La Voix*. To this end, for a few months, its journal reported on the achievements undertaken by the CNIN, and even endorsed the declarations of the CNIN's director, Mme Tournier, on the need to "unite wills." Not only that, *La Voix* also began to report on the issues of Études Tsiganes, and included Matéo Maximoff (the only Tsiganes among the founders of Études Tsiganes, who had expressed his opposition to the idea of Romanestan) on its editorial board. The *Tsiganologues* publicly took up the gauntlet thrown down by Rouda and from 1963 opened their pages to the content of *La Voix*, emphasising the messages of cordiality sent by its director. *Tsiganologues* and representatives of the Tsiganes even managed to meet in person to try to draw up a joint social agenda. The "First Tzigane Social Round Table" in 1964 brought together specialists "from

vember 1964. "Confidential" reply from Jean Gouazé, Direction de la Réglementation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 November 1964, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

30 Report signed by Jean Gouazé, 10 October 1964, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

31 Letter from Gouazé, Direction de la Réglementation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 November 1964.

32 Report signed by Jean Gouazé, 10 October 1964, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

33 *Études Tsiganes* had already established contacts with UNESCO, as reported at a meeting of the inter-ministerial commission, chaired by Join-Lambert. It should be noted that, in 1960, the Commission's members included officials from the Ministry of the Interior, such as Piazza. Minutes of the meeting of 10 February 1960 of the Inter-ministerial Commission for the Study of Questions Concerning Populations of Nomad Origin, ANF-S, 19870256-1.

34 Letter from Peyssard to Join-Lambert, 7 November 1964, ANF-S, 19870256-1.

35 Questions discussed with M. Peyssard, CNIN, 28 October 1964. ANF-S, 19870256-3.

36 Order 26 February 1965, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 13 March 1965, p. 11.

37 LDV, "XXV^e Congrès national de la LICA," 324 (1965), p. 5.

38 LVMT, Vanko Rouda: "En guise d'éditorial," 7 (1962), p. 7.

39 LVMT, Vanko Rouda: "Aperçu sur le peuple gitan," 9 (1963), p. 19.

the Gadjé side” and “from the Tzigane side.” Although no agreement was reached, it demonstrated the willingness of members of the two groups to come to an understanding (Barrera, 2022b, pp. 256-257).

These meetings however would only serve to make the *experts* – especially Join-Lambert – view him as an enemy, more dangerous and more threatening, if that were possible, than his predecessor:

Rotaru is not, in truth, the only one at fault, for Vanko Rouda is at least as disturbing; he is more precise, more intelligent and utterly lacking in frankness. His refusal to tell Ms. Lafay whether he was Catholic or Pentecostal illustrates Vanko Rouda’s constant double dealing.⁴⁰

THE EXPERT CRIES OUT: “THE SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE” (1965-1976)

The outlawing of the CMG and the birth of the CIT led to the expansion of *Tsigan* activist networks, which, from the mid-1960s, maintained constant collaboration with British Romani activism and its leaders, particularly Grattan Puxon (Acton, 1974, pp. 155-174). Rouda’s increasing prominence, not surprisingly, made him a target of criticism by the *Tsiganologues*, who in 1965 were still appalled at the possibility of giving his organisation, the CIT, “whose activity does not correspond to the deep concerns of the majority of *Tsiganes*, a monopoly on action.”⁴¹

This was echoed by Join-Lambert, whose irritation at Rotaru’s public statements was gradually evolving into a conspicuous fear of the movement’s expansion under Vanko Rouda’s leadership. In 1966, visibly angry, he repeated to Peyssard, the president of the CNIN, the need to close ranks in firm opposition to ethnic activism: “I am fundamentally opposed to the creation of an association of *Tsiganes* and *Yenisch* based on race. [...] I have always fought against the existence of such an association [being] constituted at a national level.” Two arguments supported this “fundamental opposition.” One was of a political nature: “such a formation would have extremely serious political drawbacks, it would lead to the creation of a *Tsigan* movement comparable to the *Scionist* [sic] movement.” The second argument was based on the “racial nature” and interests of the *Tsiganes*, which Join-Lambert, as a good *Tsiganologue*, considered he knew better than they did themselves: “*Tsiganes* and *Yenisch* do not have the same racial origin and many simply want to be integrated into the nation [...]. Let us not agree to any policy advocated by Vanko Rouda and the stateless Matéo Maximoff,” he urged Peyssard.⁴²

These opinions were immediately brought to the attention of the French police services and used to justify an initial investigation into Vanko Rouda. At the end of 1966, Rouda had published a letter protesting against the fact that some French localities continued to prohibit Travellers from parking. While agreeing with Rouda’s complaint, the French intelligence services (RG) launched an investigation into his activities. In the initial processing of the case file, the instructions of the Minister of Social Affairs on the matter were noted, including that “the Councillor of State Join-Lambert, President of the Ministerial Commission on Nomads” and (again) “R.P. Fleury” (Chaplain-General of the Gitans) and the “Services of the Ministry of Social Affairs [have] voiced the most express reservations” about Rouda’s activity.⁴³ Nonetheless, further on in the case file, it becomes apparent that, while Join-Lambert was most concerned with the political and national aspects of Romani activism, what disturbed the police most was Rouda’s activity in defence of the interests of *Tsiganes* living on the outskirts of Paris and the ensuing altercations with the authorities.⁴⁴ The information that had been gathered about him at the time, however, was very limited: the CIT was not mentioned and Rotaru, the former leader of the defunct CMG, was credited with exerting an influence in *La Voix* that he no longer had.

Nevertheless, the informant’s statement after comparing the two figures is significant: “The two men have a good relationship but Rotaru is much more Gitan than Dauvergne” (note the use of Rouda’s French surname). Whereas years earlier, the police had echoed the *Tsiganologues’* judgements on Rotaru’s ethnic identity and rejected his *Tsigan* origins in order to undermine his legitimacy as a leader, these origins were now acknowledged, not in order to back his credentials as a “king,” but to explain that he was “illiterate,” someone who “worked only irregularly.” The emphasis on his *Gitan* identity now served to discredit him as an individual by drawing on the dense imaginary of age-old stereotypes attributed to the “conceptual Gypsy,” to use the illuminating phrase of Selling (2015). Contrasting with the caricature of Rotaru, now a *Gitan* to the core, the profile of Vanko Rouda included no observations about his character (which the *Tsiganologues* had described, with some concern, as “intelligent” and “lacking in frankness”) and noted only his professional and military career, his “voluntary” position as editor of *La Voix* and his mother’s “Hungarian

Tsiganologues and Romani activism, which placed him in an awkward position for both parties (Barrera, 2022c).

43 Note by Direction de la Réglementation and report by RG, 5 December 1966. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

44 Note, “Stationnement des nomades-requête M. Vanko Rouda,” ANF-I, 19970156-3. In the autumn of 1966, Rouda and other Romani leaders had interceded on behalf of the *Tsigan* population of Yugoslav origin before the town council of Montreuil-sous-Bois to prevent the demolition of their houses, see LVMT, Leuléa Rouda: “Au mépris de l’homme,” 28 (1967), pp. 1-8.

40 Issues discussed with M. Peyssard, CNIN, 28 October 1964. ANF-S, 19870256-3.

41 CNIN note, June 1965. ANF-S, 19870256-3.

42 Letter from Join-Lambert to Peyssard, 28 December 1966, ANF-S, 19870256-3. Since the beginnings of *Études Tsiganes*, Matéo Maximoff had had a mediating role between the

Tzigane origin.”⁴⁵ The Intelligence Services (RG) were unaware of the activities of the CIT, which Rouda managed to conduct in a semi-clandestine manner, and so barely perceived the attraction of the CIT and its power of mobilisation. Join-Lambert, much to his annoyance, had sensed its potential, which would soon turn out to be well-founded.

On 3 January 1969, a new law was passed in France “relating to the exercise of itinerant activities and the regime applicable to persons circulating in France without fixed abode or residence.” The anthropometrical identity booklet was replaced by circulation booklets for French nationals with no fixed abode. While this was obviously more liberal than the 1912 law, the new measure also kept the “Gens du voyage,” or Travellers (a new administrative category replacing that of “nomade”) outside common law and continued to allow the State to control their movements. Despite these ambiguities, the adoption of the law was welcomed by the *Tsiganologues*, who were quick to point out that this legislative change would not have been possible without the 1948 Commission chaired by Join-Lambert, the advance in knowledge of the “psychology of the Tsigane” initiated by Études Tsiganes, and the mediating role of CNIN between the *Tsiganes* and the public authorities.⁴⁶ Not everyone, however, was so pleased with the new law. In March 1970, in one of the journals of the anti-racism movement, Leuléa Rouda, who now signed as Secretary-General of the CIT, criticised the contradictions in the 1969 law concerning *Recommendation 563 on the situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe* which was adopted by the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe on September 30th of the same year.⁴⁷

The reference by Leuléa Rouda to *Recommendation 563* was of great significance as far as Romani activism was concerned, as it was the result of the complaints that Vanko Rouda’s CIT and the Gypsy Council had been making to the European authorities about the flagrant violation of the rights of the Roma and similar groups, such as Travellers, in member countries of the Council of Europe.⁴⁸ Join-Lambert, in fact, had not been unaware of the talks held between the delegation of Romani activists and the Social Affairs committee. As soon as he had received the first reports advising him of the manoeuvres being made by the CIT and the Gypsy Council before the Council of Europe, the *expert* hastened to try to put things right. On the one hand, he alerted the French government, which, nevertheless, still took some

time to react; on the other, he wrote to the secretary of the Social Affairs committee to explain that only specialised bodies, such as the “scientific association” Études Tsiganes (of whose journal he sent several issues) and the CNIN, which controlled most of the associations assisting the *Tsiganes* in France—most “but not all; the ones that Mr Vanko Rouda is responsible for are not included”—could provide him with accurate knowledge of the situation of the *Tsiganes* in France. He himself, he added, would contact the Gypsy Lore Society so that it, too, could make itself available to the Council.⁴⁹

Despite these attempts and those of the French government, the CIT and the Gypsy Council provided much of the information that was used in the draft recommendation. It did not leave France in a good position; apart from highlighting the serious accommodation problem of Travellers, it criticised the recent 1969 law for the limitations on the exercise of basic rights (choice of place of residence, voting, etc.) that it had forced on them. The CIT, which was quoted extensively throughout the text, was recognised as the highest authority on Travellers and *Tsiganes* in France and identified as the body that “actively seeks recognition of the civil rights of Traveller families, bringing the acts of segregation of which the Tziganes are victims to the attention of national and international human rights organisations.”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the only mention of Études Tsiganes was relegated to a footnote, following the reference to *La Voix*, of which Rouda was the editor.

Join-Lambert reacted by detailing his observations on the draft recommendation in a document he provided to the Ministry of the Interior; not only did he consider its interpretation of French law to be wrong but he also criticised the position accorded to the CIT as being “totally out of proportion to its real importance” and described the text as “a veiled invitation” to the authorities to collaborate with Rouda’s organisation. This, in his view, was not feasible since in France, unlike in other “East [European] countries,” the law did not provide for the recognition of ethnic minorities that Rouda demanded. Furthermore, it was also an insult to Join-Lambert since it implied a lack of gratitude (a “snub”) to “associations founded and run by Gadjés [non-Roma].”⁵¹

It mattered little that the final Recommendation turned out to be considerably milder than the draft that preceded it: “We have surely avoided the worst,” one of Join-Lambert’s contacts in Strasbourg confessed with relief.⁵² The crucial point about the whole affair in the eyes of the *Tsiganologue*—and here he was right—was the attention that Romani activist organisations had received as privileged interlocutors of the Council of Europe,

45 RG investigation on “La Voix Mondiale Tzigane (Vanko Rouda).” 27 January 1967, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

46 *ÉT*, Pierre Join-Lambert, “Vote du Project de loi relatif à l’exercice des activités ambulantes et au régime applicable aux personnes circulant en France sans domicile ni résidence fixe,” 4 (1968), pp. 27–38.

47 *Droit et Liberté*, Leuléa Rouda, “Les Gitans, ces parias,” 290 (1970), p. 9.

48 The French government’s handling of this issue differs from the way it was addressed in the UK. For an analysis of the discussions between the British government, the Gypsy Council and the Council of Europe, see García Sanz, 2022.

49 Letter from Join-Lambert to Marc Sand, 9 May 1969, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

50 Draft recommendation, Committee on Social questions, Council of Europe, Doc. 2629, 18 September 1969, p.7.

51 Anon. [Join-Lambert]: “Observations sur le rapport sur la situation des tsigane,” n.d. Underlining in the original. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

52 Letter from Maurice Colinon, n.d. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

bypassing both the national authorities and their *Tsiganologue* advisors in their respective countries. In the years that followed, Join-Lambert worked tirelessly to redress this contempt for *expert* authority. He sent letters to his contacts in the Council of Europe to remind them of the existence of Études Tsiganes and the CNIN, and to warn them of the dire consequences for Tsiganes and Travelers in France of any recognition as an ethnic minority.⁵³

In the meantime, Join-Lambert intensified his campaign against the CIT's influence in France and against Vanko Rouda. Not a year had passed since *Recommandation 563* when he wrote to the Minister of the Interior, Raymond Marcellin, to perform his "duty [to] draw [Marcellin's] personal attention to the problems of a political nature posed by the activity of the CIT." Given the alleged dangers of all kinds that Rouda and his organisation represented, Join-Lambert urged Marcellin to carry out a "discreet and thorough investigation," focusing in particular "on the often mysterious personalities of the leaders of the Committee, its structures and its national and international connections." Join-Lambert accompanied his letter with a "note on these problems," in case this could be of help to guide the suggested enquiry.⁵⁴

The 'note' was in fact a lengthy document, in which the *Tsiganologue* had outlined the disasters that might occur if what he believed to be the CIT's plans were to come to fruition. The document focused in a rather hackneyed fashion on raising suspicions about Rouda, a worthy disciple of the "fantasist and compulsive liar," Rotaru, whom Join-Lambert still regarded as the source of all evil. As he had done previously with the leader of the CMG, Join-Lambert called into question Rouda's ethnic identity, this time using a logic reminiscent of the Nazi laws on *racial purity* and *anti-miscegenation*: "There is some mystery about his origins: he does not appear to be entirely Tsigane; only three of his great-grandparents probably were."⁵⁵ The suspicions did not end there. Join-Lambert found it "difficult to gauge his true personality, or his brother Leuléa's for that matter." Nevertheless, it did seem clear to him that "Vanko and Leuléa Rouda [have] a definite tendency to present the facts in a different light from reality." In any case, the most dangerous thing of all, according to Join-Lambert, was that "Rouda, intelligent, attractive, certainly ambitious, probably generous, is primarily a political animal." And this was the problem for the *Tsiganologue*, that the CIT, which operated as "a government in exile," should have the temerity to "give the Tsiganes the sense of belonging to a 'Tsigane people', the 'Rom people' whose personality must be asserted." The *expert* view on the matter, as represented by Join-Lambert, was that this was a failed project, because "trying to make a Tsigane 'people' out of groups very different in origin, behaviour and aspirations [was]

to misunderstand reality." Furthermore, it constituted a serious political threat because, if the sense of being "a people" were to spread among the Tsiganes, they would, he supposed, "claim to be a racial minority and demand to be represented as such."⁵⁶

This "affaire des Tsiganes" (Tsigane affair), as the note in which Join-Lambert's information was sent to Renseignements Généraux described it, led to the umpteenth investigation into the CIT. In December 1970, a report provided fresh information on its history and current situation. Once again echoing Join-Lambert's words, it noted that the Tsigane "peoples" or "tribes" in France "have no cohesion," and that "their customs," "ways of life" and "natural inertia were significant barriers to their coming together in an organisation." In addition to their inability to organise politically, which the *experts* had noted was *innate* to the *Tsiganes*, the informant gave little credence to the political abilities of Rouda, who was described—reproducing almost word for word the insults once directed at Rotaru—as "eccentric" and a "congenital liar," and his public activity as "verbiage." While acknowledging that the CIT's performance before the Council of Europe had caused "minor damage" because of its criticism of the 1969 law, in the final assessment of the organisation, its possible influence was downplayed with the words that "it is not a proper organisation in its own right and, in general, its credibility is low."⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the informant recognised the greater importance and reach of the Mouvement Evangeliste Tzigane (Tsigane Evangelical Movement), which provided the social base for the Romani movement. The link between the religious leader Clément Le Cossec and the CIT, which went back years but was only now being uncovered by the police, clearly existed and the evangelical movement had certainly been a mainstay of support for Rouda (Acton, 1974, p. 172). The significance of this reference in 1970 to the movement led by Le Cossec is that it marked the beginning of a shift in police attention from the CIT to evangelicalism, on the grounds that, apart from its political bias, its capacity to mobilise could lead to public demonstrations (and hence disorder).

This new information was not immediately passed on to Join-Lambert, who wrote to Marcellin again in 1971 to ask for explanations: "I am worried. The situation is getting worse [...], its international audience is growing." His nervousness stemmed, this time, from the contacts that the CIT had made with Vatican representatives and the meetings that it was planning for the following months.⁵⁸ In the reassuring reply he received from the police, the latter confined itself to promising to be vigilant to outlaw any French association affiliated to the CIT but gave no hint to Join-Lambert of the monitoring

53 Letter from Join-Lambert to Jurdant, 31 July 1970, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

54 Letter from Join-Lambert to Marcellin, 28 August 1970, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

55 For the question of anti-Roma racial laws during the Third Reich, see Sierra, 2020, pp. 69-86.

56 Confidential note, letter from Join-Lambert to Marcellin, 28 August 1970, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

57 Note, "Le Comité international Tzigane de M. Jacques Dauvergne, dit Vanko Rouda," December 1970, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

58 Letter from Join-Lambert to Marcellin, 25 March 1971, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

of Le Cossec's organisation during those months.⁵⁹ From then on, his contact with the police on the subject of Romani activism decreased considerably. Only in 1976 did he return to the fray to denounce Rouda's appearance on the France 3 radio station. "The con continues. Vanko Rouda continues to pass himself off as a Tsigane," he claimed, once again impugning the Romani leader's ethnic identity and taking him to task for inaccuracies in his data on the *Tsiganes* in France; "but such inaccuracy is not unusual," he concluded condescendingly.⁶⁰

Several things happened in the intervening years to explain the waning interest of both Join-Lambert and the police in Rouda. After the First World Romani Congress was held in Orpington, near London, in April 1971, the CIT, now renamed the Comité International Rom (International Rom Committee) to serve as an umbrella organisation for all the world Romani organisations (the name was officially ratified at the congress), continued to direct its efforts towards European and international organisations, which was also the focus of the activity of its first president, Vanko Rouda. In this context, the Committee gained a foothold in France only through the organisations that joined it, which were more concerned with achieving specific legal demands than with raising awareness of a shared ethnic identity. Only Le Cossec's evangelical movement, whose drawing power led the police to compare it with "the Algerian leaders of the French Federation of the FLN in 1956-1960," prompted new investigations in the first half of the 1970s that still pointed to Rouda's role as the driving force behind the political agenda of the evangelical movement.⁶¹ Despite this, its protest actions were defused with relative ease. In 1973, several representatives of the Mission Évangélique de Tziganes de France (Tzigane Evangelical Mission in France) sent a letter to the President of the Council of Europe for him to press for the implementation of Recommendation 563.⁶² By then, however, the French government had already intervened to head off such contacts. Taking advantage of the development of the Council of Europe's work programme on Roma and other Travellers, it sent an authorised representative who, between 1972 and 1973, did his utmost to discredit the International Rom Committee in public and in private.⁶³ As an Interior Ministry official told his interlocutor in the Foreign Ministry, "This Tzigane Committee, which was

denied an observer seat at the [1972 and 1973] meetings, is no longer considered to be a representative."⁶⁴

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: THE PLACE OF THE EXPERT

By analysing the long-standing collaboration between Join-Lambert, the most preeminent of the *Tsiganologues*, and the French police apparatus, this article has illustrated some of the different perceptions that the group of *experts* harboured about themselves, as well as their interpretation of their role vis-à-vis the *Tsiganes* and the public authorities. The authority of the *Tsiganologues*, based on their ability to make valid and objective judgments, was used by Join-Lambert to constantly question and even challenge those ethnic identities he considered erroneous. The aim of this was not only to undermine the legitimacy of the *Tsigane* leaders but to demonstrate the bad faith implicit in their self-attributions. By repeatedly referring to this operation as a "fraud," Join-Lambert was accusing Rotaru and Rouda of an intention to mislead by identifying themselves as *Tsiganes*. Furthermore, his *expert* authority extended to the question of whether or not various affiliations (of those who, from 1971 onwards, started to identify themselves as Roma) could or could not be subsumed under the same ethnicity.

Join-Lambert's negative response to this question was, once again, based on the assumptions of *Tsiganologie* and its *expert* classifications. These were made from an external standpoint using colonialist criteria, and only took into account objectifiable traits (such as language or customs) but ignored other experiences (such as the feeling of a common history) that can also build ethnicity as a shared identity. The purpose of the second refutation was obvious: to dismantle the operation that the CMG and the CIT had set in motion to facilitate the convergence of different Romani groups, spread awareness that they belonged to the same *people*, and use this as a platform to push forward a programme of demands. In this context, Join-Lambert's steadfast refusal to accept that an ethnic consciousness could emerge in France that would ultimately be recognised as a minority should be read as an example of the ethnicity blindness referred to earlier. As pointed out, ethnicity blindness is not only reflected in the legal sphere but should also be regarded as a social phenomenon typical of groups and individuals, such as those studied here, who do not consider national identity and ethnic affiliation to be mutually incompatible but believe that the former must prevail and that the latter cannot be used as grounds for claiming political agency.

Their work in social services also played an important role in the way the *Tsiganologues* viewed themselves. Join-Lambert was able to make use of this when necessary to demonstrate that what the *experts* did was not

59 Letter from Somveille to Join-Lambert, 24 May 1971, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

60 Letter from Join-Lambert to Terlez, 20 May 1976. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

61 Note from RG, "Hacia una intervención de los tziganes en la escena política," 24 September 1971. ANF-I, 19970156-3.

62 Letter from the Tzigane Evangelical Mission of France to the President of the Council of Europe, 6 July 1973, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

63 See the correspondence between the heads of the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs between 1972 and 1973. The authorised representative was Adrien Wiart, Chef du Bureau de la Police Générale [Chief of the General Police Bureau], who was very familiar with the CIT investigations; handwritten note from Wiart to Fougier, 16 September 1972, ANF-I, 19970156-3.

64 Letter from Fougier to Pierre Nolet, 31 August 1973. ANF-I, 19970156-3. For the further development of treatment of the Roma question in the Council of Europe, see Liégeois, 2013.

confined to making more or less theoretical judgements but that their *expertise* also had a social application that benefited the *Tsiganes*, a duality perfectly captured in the complementarity between the Association Études Tsiganologues and the CNIN. The emphasis on the idea that the CNIN had sole responsibility for responding to the immediate needs of the *Tsiganes* had several functions. In the first place, it further discredited the Romani movement by calling its action redundant; secondly, it helped to reinforce the authority of the *experts*, who by the direct contact that their social action purportedly facilitated, gained access to first-hand knowledge of their subjects of study; finally, it highlighted the civic responsibility of *experts* who made themselves available to support the action of the public administration by putting their time and knowledge at its service.

Social responsibility was what Join-Lambert appealed to when he wrote to the authorities to denounce the threat posed by the CMG and the CIT. The decision to alert the police and thus trigger a campaign of surveillance and neutralisation was clearly aimed at preserving the quasi-monopoly of Études Tsiganes and the CNIN on *expert* authority and social action. Nevertheless, the repeated use of the term “duty” in expressions often found in Join-Lambert’s letters (it is “my duty to draw the attention” of the public authorities to...) was not just a discursive device or rhetorical formality but reflected an awareness of the role of *experts* as advisors to the State and its administration. In the case of France, this relationship had already proved to be particularly strong and effective, for example, in the way that an administration assisted by *experts* like ethnologists treated the colonial population. The expression of this duty towards the State on the part of *experts* in a field of knowledge, *Tsiganologie*, which retained significant colonialist features, seems no coincidence. Indeed, the fact that Join-Lambert’s exhortations to monitor and persecute Romani activists were successful (insofar as they led to successive investigations and even influenced the banning of the CMG and the discrediting of the CIT in the eyes of the Council of Europe) was an essential element in reinforcing the authority of the *expert*, which is always constructed in permanent dialogue with that of the audience at whose service he places his knowledge.

To sum up, this in-depth exploration of the function of *experts* and their knowledge has enabled us firstly to elucidate the role they played within broader logics of power, such as the subalternity of the Roma in recent French history. At the same time, it also gives us an idea of the obstacles faced by those movements that offered an alternative view or directly demonstrated their resistance to being framed within the parameters of *expert* knowledge in which they did not recognise themselves. Finally, exploring the history of *experts* and their *expertise* in cases such as *Tsiganologie* may be an intellectually subversive exercise since it enables those who have historically had the privilege and power to delimit and define *others* as the object of their knowledge to be con-

verted into the subject of study, and therefore, of interrogation.

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